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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 7 December 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to you today to convey the alarm of the Palestinian people and their leadership regarding the continuous hostile, aggressive and illegal settlement campaign being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The destructive impact of Israel's illegal settlement activities on the situation on the ground, on the prospects for peace negotiations between the two sides and on the viability of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders cannot be overstated.

In the period since our last letter to you, we have witnessed the flagrant continuation of this illegal Israeli colonization scheme, in addition to innumerable other illegal policies and practices, as the Israeli Government continues to flaunt its impunity before the eyes of the international community. The continued impotence of the international community, including the Security Council, to hold Israel accountable seems clearly to only invigorate this lawless campaign as Israeli officials, including the Prime Minister, compete to outdo one another as to who is the more fervent supporter of the settlements and the lawless, extremist settlers who have been transferred to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to inhabit those illegal settlements and to terrorize the Palestinian civilian population as part of the occupying Power's efforts to entrench its occupation and control the land, devoid of the indigenous Palestinian people, whom it seeks to forcibly displace, or rather ethnically cleanse, via the vast network of illegal policies and practices it inflicts upon them.

In addition to the series of announcements last month regarding the plans to construct thousands of new settlement units, particularly in areas in and around Occupied East Jerusalem, the occupying Power has announced plans to construct yet another 119 units in the illegal settlement of "Shilo" north of Occupied East Jerusalem. The Israeli Defense Ministry itself approved these plans to expand this

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settlement deep into the West Bank by more than 60 per cent. Israel has also continued to forcibly confiscate Palestinian land, including 1,500 dunums (375 acres) of land in an area north-east of the Jordan Valley for the expansion of the illegal annexation Wall and of several illegal so-called "settlement outposts" nearby. Also, on 1 December, Israel began the construction of a new road intended to link the illegal Israeli settlements in Occupied East Jerusalem. Of course, this road, like so many other similar roads constructed by the occupying Power as part of the apartheid system imposed on the Palestinian people under its occupation, is intended to serve as an Israeli-only road and will also further sever the Holy City from the rest of its natural Palestinian environs.

In grave contravention of international humanitarian law, the Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes and properties and the eviction of Palestinian families, including children and elderly persons, have also continued throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Recent examples of this illegal, inhumane policy include the destruction of a manufacturing facility for stone-cutting in the area of the city of Qalqilya. That facility was the source of income for eight Palestinian families, whose livelihood has now been destroyed. Also, this past Monday, 5 December, the occupying Power destroyed a Palestinian home in the Silwan neighbourhood of Occupied East Jerusalem, leaving at least 15 Palestinians homeless, including a two-week-old baby. The traumatized Burqan family, to whom the home belonged, was not even allowed to retrieve furniture and personal belongings from the home before it was demolished. That same day, Israeli bulldozers destroyed another Palestinian structure in Beit Hanina. Also, violating the prohibition of the forced transfer of civilians, Israel has ordered the deportation of yet another Palestinian, Ahmad Attoun, from his native city of Jerusalem, following the revocation of his residency permit and his seizure after a year of sheltering in an International Committee of the Red Cross building in the City.

At the same time, the Israeli settlers continue their rampage of terror and violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Recent incidents include the shocking abduction, on 5 December, of a Palestinian shepherd, Salim Shehadeh, age 60, by extremist settlers from the illegal "Yitzhar" settlement in the area of Nablus. Those settlers also stole the shepherd's flock of 50 sheep. Just a few days earlier, on 3 December, several settlers from the illegal "Itamar" settlement attacked and beat another 60-year-old Palestinian man. Then, on 4 December, a group of Israeli settlers set fire to Palestinian agricultural land in the northern West Bank, destroying at least 5 dunums of cultivated land. That attack was perpetrated after the arrest by Israeli police of seven female settlers for so-called "price tag" attacks against Palestinian civilians. Today, 7 December, anti-Arab graffiti was found scrawled on the walls of yet another mosque, this time in the village of Burqin near the city of Nablus, and the mosque was also targeted for arson, as burning tyres were rolled towards its entrance.

Regrettably, Israeli escalation and provocations also continue with illegal Israeli actions against the defenceless Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip. In addition to the continuation of its unjust and illegal blockade of Gaza, which is being imposed in collective punishment of the entire population and which continues to gravely affect all aspects of life there, the occupying Power continues its military attacks targeting the area. Today, one Palestinian man was killed and at least two other civilians were wounded as a result of an Israeli air strike. Moreover,

the Chief of Staff of the Israeli military has warned that Israel is prepared to launch a major operation against the Gaza Strip.

Such flagrant threats and provocations by Israel, along with its reckless pursuit of so many illegal policies and practices, especially its rabid settlement campaign throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are the cause of the continuous decline of the situation on the ground and are inflaming sensitivities and tensions between the sides. The failure to bring a halt to these illegal and destructive Israeli actions threatens to seriously destabilize the already fragile situation with dire consequences, including with regard to the prospects for the realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. The Palestinian leadership thus renews its calls on the international community, and particularly the Security Council, to uphold the rule of law, to uphold the relevant United Nations resolutions and to uphold their duties under the Charter of the United Nations and to act with urgency to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease all of these illegal policies and to abide immediately by its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. Should Israel continue to fail to comply and continue to blatantly defy the international community, serious collective action should be undertaken to hold Israel accountable for all of its violations. We are convinced that only such direct and principled action by the international community, including the Security Council, can actually bring an end to Israel's impunity and salvage the two-State solution.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 411 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 16 November 2011 (A/ES-10/539-S/2011/724), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.